

A Holiday Collecting Butterflies in Andorra, July, 1978

By M. J. SYMES *

My parents and I left Salbris, just north of Vierzon at 7.30 a.m. Keeping to the N20, we passed through Cahors at lunch-time. It was here that the butterflies really became noticeable. The large and unmistakable *Brintesia circe* Fab. was to be found gliding across this road and I observed a large female specimen on the road-side before another was hit by our own car. This parallels Mr. G. G. Baldwin's observations (*Ent. Rec.* 90: 90) regarding his experiences of numerous incidences of this butterfly having been hit by motor vehicles whilst holiday motoring in France.

Half-way to Montauban, having covered 420 Km without a single break, we pulled into a lay-by for a picnic lunch. Armed with a cheese and tomato roll in one hand and my kite net in the other, I made a quick but thorough search of the immediate area. Half-an-hour later we resumed our journey to Andorra. In those thirty minutes I had consumed four rolls and had collected a fresh female *Nymphalis polychloros polychloros* L., one male *Gonepteryx cleopatra cleopatra* L., a male and female *Melanargia galathea* L., and both sexes of *Brintesia circe* Fab. It was from that lunch-time onwards that I was convinced that a successful and exciting fortnight's holiday lay ahead of me. We reached my Aunt's home at Encamp after a fierce thunderstorm as we climbed from Ax-les-Thermes to the numerous hairpin bends of the Pas de la Casa, a days run of 700 Km.

The following morning, the 25th July, I awoke to brilliant sunshine and a clear blue sky as Mr. Kincaid, ex-motor racing driver, hurled me around the mountain bends to St. Julià de Lòria where I had a date with Dr. P. J. L. Roche and the unexpected pleasure of meeting and collecting with Mr. J. M. Chalmers-Hunt and Dr. C. J. Luckens. It was a marvellous thrill and great honour for a seventeen year old to be accepted in the midst of such experienced entomologists. Dr. Roche is primarily a hemipterist but also has amassed an extensive knowledge of the *Rhopalocera* of Andorra and has produced a fine reference collection of butterflies from this country. During my stay he kindly showed me his favourite haunts and indicated other areas of entomological interest.

By far the most exciting and productive locality for general collecting was the valley visited by Dr. Roche, J. A. C. and D. F. Greenwood in July, 1976 (*Vide Ent. Rec.*, 89: 277).

This being my first collecting holiday abroad I walked the narrow, stony path leading to this area in sheer wonder as numbers of *Melanargia galathea lachesis* Hueb. and *Colias crocea* Geoff., as if taunting me, winged their respective ways to more rugged parts inaccessible to even the most agile and eager lepidopterist. *Macroglossum stellatarum* L. were busily hovering, darting away at slightest approach. All this even

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before we had reached the valley! *Coenonympha arcania* L. was quite abundant, its flight being slow and fluttering rather like *C. pamphilus pamphilus* L., settling now and again upon grass stalks and stems. Other common Satyrids that I took on my first day were a male and female *Maniola jurtina hispulla* Esp., a male *Lasiommata megera megera* L. and a female *Pararge aegeria aegeria* L. It seemed odd to me that the slow and hesitant latter butterfly should have orange instead of yellowish spots due to my familiarity with the West-European sub-species *tircis*. *B. circe* Fab. was also common here frequently alighting upon the path before me. I noted that the thick trunks of oak trees were particularly favoured by this large and striking species as resting places. When disturbed it tends to fly for some distance before it considers it prudent to settle once more. Fritillaries were similarly abundant and to be honest I was amazed at the number of different species to be found in such a small area. We then tried to attract *Apatura ilia barcina* Vty. with fermented banana bait à la *Charaxes* hunter but unfortunately to no avail on this particular occasion. *Parnassius apollo* L. seemed to be fairly scarce, yet Mr. Chalmers-Hunt kindly managed to take one fine male specimen for me.

However, various members of the *Lycaenidae* were more willing to show themselves such as *Lycaeides idas* L., *Nordmannia ilicis* Esp., *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeas* L., and *Heodes virgaureae* L. There was also no paucity of Pierids which ranged from the colourful fast-flying *Colias* species, *hyale* and *crocea* to the inconspicuous *Leptidae sinapis* L., who well deserves P. B. M. Allan's comic title of "The Bosky Footle" due to its weak and irresolute flight. The skippers *Ochlodes venatus* Brem. & Grey. and *Carcharodus flocciferus* Zeller. were flying low and swiftly along the ground like most species of this family. I spotted a Large Blue, this sighting being confirmed since Mr. Chalmers-Hunt secured a specimen of *arion* shortly afterwards. One sight record, however, was to remain unconfirmed, this concerning *Pandoriana pandora* D. & S. I recall that it flew in the manner of *Argynnis paphia* L., but was easily distinguished from it by the brick-red colour of the underside of the forewings. It was gliding high amongst the trees at one stage and then dropped, swooping suddenly to feed where it remained tantalizingly out of reach. This constitutes the first record of this butterfly in Andorra known to Dr. Roche. Another note of entomological interest was struck by the capture of an elegant adult member of the *Myrmelcontidae* which Dr. Roche accepted since the insect had not previously been recorded by him in the Principality.

A visit to Encamp Cortals on the following day yielded a few different species in addition to those observed in the valley at St. Julià the day before especially *Erebia* species, scores of *E. epiphron fauveaui* de Lesse, taking to the wing in bright sunshine. Certain members of the *Polyommata* were also noticeable, a list of the butterflies I have recorded follow-

ing this general account. A few days later at this locality *Colias phicomone* Esp., and *Eumedonia eumedon* Esp. were taken. A darker race of the former butterfly was noted at Grau Roig. *E. eumedon* was found in great abundance but was extremely local, not venturing any further than two metres from its pabulum. *Geranium pratense*.

My great reward was undoubtedly the capture of *Apatura ilia barcina* Vty., at St. Julià on July 29th. What a day! Having seen *ilia* flashing speedily by, my hunting instincts were aroused and with a nearby stone covered generously with bait there was little I could do but wait, ignore the other distracting butterflies and let those troublesome Tabanid flies feast on me. I did not have to wait for very long to be graced with his regal presence. The lofty insect totally ignored our humble offerings and commenced to imbibe moisture from a muddy pool to quench the royal thirst. "Even Emperors can be beaten", I thought, approaching with extreme caution as I nervously viewed those illusive quivering wings with iridescent purple sheen. Expecting to clap my net down upon it easily, my "prize" had other ideas, darting swiftly to my right where I netted it in flight. Another memorable catch for me was that of a male and female *Iphiclides podalirius feisthamelii* Duponchel both looking freshly emerged, a female *Lampides boeticus* L., being taken in the same net as the female Scarce Swallow-tail.

I spent many fine and happy days collecting with Dr. Roche in his wonderful valley but as you will have already noted, my collecting was not confined there alone. Let me tell you of just one afternoon near Encamp. We left at 3.30 p.m. and within ten minutes we had arrived at Vila, a small village at 1,328 m. Here the tarmac ended and a rough winding flinty track led upwards towards Cortals de Vexalis at 1,550 m. On leaving the car we came to a small stream. There were butterflies everywhere including an intermediate between *Melanargia galathea lachesis* Hueb. and *Melanargia galathea galathea* L. A male *Lampides boeticus* L., not a common butterfly here, was netted, flying alongside *Lysandra albicans albicans* H-Sch. As we climbed the dusty track and the family commenced to pick wild strawberries and raspberries I had boxed my first *Macroglossum stellatarum*, quickly followed by another. My father greatly enjoyed his sightings of a Black Redstart and Woodchat Shrike as I pursued *Colias crocea* ignoring *B. circe* settling on the road at our feet. Whilst we rested at the "American House" my father caught a magnificent female *Mesoacidalia aglaja aglaja* L. We walked back to the car, tired and dusty, with a bag of wild fruit and an exalting afternoon's catch. As I sit upstairs with my setting boards in the cold winter months, each specimen brings back those sunny, happy and exciting days in Andorra.

The following is a list of the Rhoplocera noticed:—

PAPILIONIDAE: 1. *Iphiclides podalirius feisthamelii* Duponchel, 2. *Parnassius apollo* L.

PIERIDAE: 3. *Aporia crataegi* L., 4. *Pieris brassicae brassicae* L., 5. *P. rapae* L., 6. *P. napi napi* L., 7. *Colias phicomone* Esp., 8. *C. crocea* Geoff., 9. *C. hyale* L., 10. *C. australis* Vty., 11. *Gonepteryx rhammi* L., 12. *Lepidea sinapis* L.

LIBYTHEIDAE: 13. *Libythea celtis* Laich.

NYPHALIDAE: 14. *Apatura ilia barcina* Vty., 15. *Limenitis camilla* L., 16. *Inachis io* L., 17. *Vanessa atalanta* L., 18. *V. cardui* L., 19. *Aglais urticae urticae* L., 20. *Polygonia c-album* L., 21. *Argynnis paphia paphia* L., 22. *Mesoacidalia aglaja aglaja* L., 23. *Fabriciana adippe adippe* D. & S., 24. *Pandoriana pandora* D. & S., (Unconfirmed), 25. *Brenthis daphne* D. & S., 26. *B. ino* Rott., 27. *Boloria pales pyrenes-miscens* Vty., 28. *B. napaea* Hoff., 29. *Proclossiana eunomia eunomia* Esp., 30. *Clossiana selene* D. & S., 31. *Melitaea cinxia* L., 33. *M. phoebe phoebe* D. & S., 34. *M. didyma meridionalis* Stdgr., 35. *M. diamina diamina* Lang., 36. *M. diamina vernetensis* Rondou, 37. *Mellicta athalia celadussa* Fruh., 38. *Mellicta parthenoides* Kef.

SATYRIDAE: 39. *Melanargia galathea lachesis* Huebn., 40. *Satyrus actaea* Esp., 41. *Brintesia circe* Fab., 42. *Erebia epiphron fauveau* de Lesse, 43. *E. euryale euryale* Esp., 44. *F. cassioides arvenensis* Obthr., 45. *E. oeme oeme* Huebn., 46. *Maniola jurtina hispulla* Esp., 47. *Hyponephele lycaon* Kuehn., 48. *Pyronia tithonus* L., 49. *Coenonympha pamphilus pamphilus* L., 50. *C. arcania arcania* L., 51. *Pararge aegeria aegeria* L., 52. *Lasiommata maera maera* L.

LYCAENIDAE: 53. *Thecla betulae* L., 54. *Quercusia quercus quercus* L., 55. *Nordmannia acaciae* Feb., 56. *N. ilicis* Esp., 57. *Strymondia spini* D. & S., 58. *Strymonidia w-album* Knoch., 59. *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeas* L., 60. *Heodes virgaureae virgaureae* L., 61. *Palaeochrysophanus hippothoe hippothoe* L., 62. *Lampides boeticus* L., 63. *Everes alcetas* Hoff., 64. *Cupido minimus minimus* Fuess., 65. *Celastrina argiolus* L., 66. *Maculinea arion arion* L., 67. *Lycaeides idas idas* L., 68., 69. *Cyaniris semiargus* Rott., 70. *Plebicula escheri escheri* Huebn., 71. *P. thersites* Cant., 72. *Lysandra albicans albicans* H.-Sch., 73. *Polyommatus icarus* Rott.

HESPERIIDAE: 74. *Pyrgus malvae* L., 75. *P. cirsii* Rambur., 76. *Carcharodus alceae* Esp., 77. *C. flocciferus* Zeller., 78. *Thymelicus sylvestris* Poda., 79. *Hesperia comma comma* L., 80. *Ochlodes venatus* Brem. & Grey.

Acknowledgement

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Reference

Higgins, L. G. and Riley, N. D., 1970. *A Field Guide to the Butterflies Britain and Europe*.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON IMMIGRANT LEPIDOPTERA NOTED IN 1979. — Please send any records of interest for inclusion in a paper by us to: R. F. BRETHERTON, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0LE; or to me. — J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT, 1 Hardcourts Close, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9LG.